"Lead, Kindly Light"

John Sheridan Zelie

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Lead, Kindly Light

"Lead, Kindly Light"

INTIMATIONS
FROM
CARDINAL NEWMAN'S
HYMN
BY
JOHN SHERIDAN ZELIE

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IN LOVING MEMORY
OF MY MOTHER
CAROLINE PRESCOTT ZELIE

Contents

	PAGE
Lead, Kindly Light	1
Amid the Encircling Gloom	11
The Distant Scene	21
One Step Enough	29
Not Ever Thus	38
But Now Lead Thou Me On	47
The Garish Day	56
Remember Not Past Years	64
So Long Thy Power Hath Blest Me	73
O'er Moor and Fen	82
O'er Crag and Torrent	92
And With the Morn Those Angel Faces Smile	101

Lead, Kindly Light

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene,—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day; and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

At Sea, *June* 16, 1833.

Lead, Kindly Light

THERE are few hymns which describe, phrase by phrase, as many of life's actual situations as Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light." But in the brief space that it takes to sing it, one may catch its central thought of guidance without stopping to notice how many and how different are the experiences for which that guidance is asked. They are described with such precision that nearly every phrase may be taken out of the hymn and stand as a separate and definite theme. Just what each line may have meant to Newman himself, I do not know, and no one has the right to say, but it is certainly legitimate to follow out for one's self the fascination

of those richly suggestive phrases of his hymn into one after another of their counterparts in the life of all of us. Many of his own words spoken or written on other occasions illustrate the words of his hymn, and may connect themselves with it in our minds even if they did not in his own. Often his words may be illustrated by events in his own history, but every one of them finds plenty of parallels in the most ordinary life for anyone who stops to reflect upon what they may mean.

The writing of the hymn was not an event of importance in Newman's life, and only a few times did he ever allude to it again. In his *Apologia* he tells us the now well-known story of its origin. In June of 1833, he was in Italy. "I was aching to get home; yet for want of a vessel I was kept at Palermo for three weeks. At last I got off in an orange-boat, bound for Marseilles. Then it was

that I wrote the lines, 'Lead, Kindly Light,' which have since become well-known. We were becalmed a whole week in the Straits of Bonifacio. I was writing verses the whole time of my passage." This, with the statement made years afterward to Dr. Greenhill, of Hastings, that he could not remember nor explain the meaning of the last couplet in the hymn, and the remark that he attributed the success of the hymn to the beauty of the tune, is all that he has told us concerning it. But seventy-five years of constant use by the Christian world add something to a hymn. It becomes woven in with much of our thought about life, and it comes to express for us many things which, while not in the author's thought, are not at variance with it.

To those who keep in mind its origin, it must always seem something of a misfortune that it has come to be used so gener-

ally as a funeral hymn. It has nothing of the character of a Nunc Dimittis, but is more like a threshold hymn or a prayer before a journey. Death is the one discipline of the soul that is strikingly absent from the whole poem. It is not the prayer of one whose company is gone before, and whose eyes are dim, but the utterance of one whose eyes are opened at last to see what the journey may involve and how long it may be. There is no thought of death. It is a young man's hymn. Its outlook is not the heavens opened to receive the weary pilgrim with their "well done," but the long stretches of the common earthly life, its tracts of deadly monotony, and those passages of excitement and danger in which men too often miss their way and forget their goal. And the thing for which he prays is that hereafter he may not, as in the past, miss the significance and the truth that belong to

each successive stage of the journey. The rhythm of the hymn floats it off so swiftly that we hardly realize how firm the facts and how real and how common are the experiences with which it deals. Like many another hymn whose beauty and music are all that is generally noticed in them, this hymn is a sea of glass mingled with fire.

But, little as Newman ever spoke of his lines again, the words he wrote in the Mediterranean were strangely prophetic of his after life and wholly consistent with the purpose that controlled it. Years later, when he had made his great decision and the die was cast, he who twelve years before had written this poem, again spoke of himself—in the last book which he wrote as an Anglican—as "one whose long-continued petition had been that the Most Merciful would not despise the work of His own Hands, *nor leave him to him-*

self." Life that was willing to be left to itself, and men who, as he believed, were willing to assume the direction of society without dependence upon God, were the forces against which he set himself with life-long persistency, and though he solved the question for himself in a way that is to most of us impossible, nevertheless his issue is our issue, and his prayer is our prayer.

I think we often doubt the full sincerity of what some of the saints have said about their own short-comings just because we do not understand that it is the finest natures that know the most about resistance to the divine leading. The greatest spiritual conflicts are carried on in lives which to our eyes seem so surrendered and devoted from the start, that we think they can no longer be the scene of such battles as disfigure our own. They know more of these things than we, and it is often the

very one who has been guided much who is the hardest to lead on the one step more.

A confession like this tells us all we need to know of those subtle rebellions and chafings against guidance which we might never suspect from outward appearance. It acknowledges also that sharper than all the discipline of guidance is the discipline of not having any. There is no misery so complete as having our own way, and this is the cry of one who has had it and now prays to be released from it. Those divine alternatives which our own minds could never discover open so naturally and constantly to the guided life that it is never fully aware of how much it has been led. It is the life of faith with all its hardships where alone the great surprises come, while a barren monotony fastens ever more and more mysteriously upon the life that has planned all for it-

self. "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Almost the saddest cry in the Old Testament is that of Saul, when, after sinning too long against light by simply not asking for it, he said, "God answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams." To live on a throne and be left to one's self is a fate the most lonely and terrible that can be conceived, and every personality is a throne. It is this experience which is the secret grief and terror of many a life before which nothing is open but to go on living in the full glare of social eminence or temporal success, unable to stop and hopeless of any leading or any goal.

Such experiences as these, once felt, give meaning to that description which calls the Light the Kindly Light. The kindliest thing that Saul could think of at last was light. And yet what one of us is

there who does not harbor still within his heart some suspicion that this is a hostile force. It may humble us too much. To much of the will of God we have already been broken, and from it we would never depart, but we dread to be led any further into that will. "For the heart," says Bishop Moule, "though it immeasurably needs the Indweller, has that in it which dreads his absolute Indwelling. Can it trust him with complete internal authority? Will he not use it to purposes terrible to the human heart, asserting his position by some infliction, some exaction, awful and unpitying?" And the answer of the whole New Testament, of Paul dealing with the half dread and half desire of his converts, and of John, years later, urging men to let in the light, is that beyond all else that it may be the light is kindly. Though it show us God's hatreds, these turn out to be our unfailing friends. Writ-

ten as it was by one who was always inclined to think too austerely of the divine dealings, let us not forget that the one attribute which the hymn names for the light that leads us is the attribute of kindliness.

Once persuaded, then, that it is kindly, the soul begins to move in a new atmosphere of trust and courage, and is soon amazed at the wealth of the things God has to show us which we could never ask or think. It looks upon the years of the wilful and unguided mind as years of barrenness and monotony. It wonders at the way it was captivated by its own understanding, and where it once dreaded guidance as leading to a life that is tame and insipid, it lives to discover that the heights of adventure are possible only to the surrendered and guided will.

Amid the Encircling Gloom

IF we study it in the light of its origin, everything in the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light" conspires to turn our minds away from what is merely plaintive or softly emotional. Such a phrase as "the encircling gloom" might too easily lead us to imagine an exaggeration of sorrows such as had no existence in the life of its writer, if we did not remember that it was the hymn of a young man entering upon a full half-century of activity and conflict, rather than the sigh of one around whom the griefs and bereavements of age had begun to fall. Let us remember, also, that at the moment of its composition the writer while he may have been taught in one of those dense fogs which are said to cover everything with sudden darkness in

the Mediterranean, was quite possibly in the midst of encircling sunlight so far as his immediate circumstances were concerned. Under the perpetual sunshine which bathed everything during that week of calm in the Italian sea, the lighter sort of nature would have wondered how anyone could speak of the encircling gloom. But when a life problem is weighing upon one's heart, the outward brightness only serves to intensify the inward distress.

The encircling gloom, then, of which the hymn complains is that which falls upon any serious life when it begins to feel an uncertainty about life's mission, or when it feels that some conversion is drawing nigh. In the very midst of their ministry prophets have often felt that their commission was cancelled or that their message was exhausted, and then the soul has been plunged into despondency. In other experiences, the soul has felt that

God was about to make it the agent of some new and untried purpose from which it shrank, as did nearly every prophet at the beginning of his call. It is this experience that lines and saddens the countenance of some whose outward circumstance is so fortunate that we do not see what they can be troubled about. These glooms are the almost unfailing costs of leadership as one questions his own fitness and secretly beats himself into shape for the work that is laid upon him. Of this character was the gloom that is expressed in the hymn.

But the majority of men know no aspiration for leadership, and this will not be their gloom. Their aims in life are quiet and modest. They feel no call to head any movement or lead any revolt. But around even such as have no further purpose than the faithful care of their own little circle there will often enough fall the

experience which cannot be better described than as an encircling gloom. The blow that destroys the business and with it all hope of doing what had seemed their sacred duty toward their own, or the loss of a position, may bring around their lives the full darkness which the phrase expresses. Upon others the crisis falls not in some dislocation of their affairs, but in some inward experience by reason of which life never seems the same again. God is never done with repeating that struggle with Jacob at Peniel, in which the patriarch was faced with the badness of his whole past life, its mixture of purposes, and the certain evil of the future if he were to go into it with the same unsurrendered spirit which prevailed in him up to that very night. Out of that gloom which closed around the traveler that night there came a new element into human life, for which Israel was ever thankful. The

Psalter was written mainly out of heaviness which made its writers, for the time being, seem of all men the least likely to have remaining to them any large or satisfying part in the influencing of the world; and the very warmth of the Psalter, which brings it nearer to human life than any other book, ought to teach us much about the mysteries of good that are hidden in the heart of life's darker passages for those who accept them as a divine discipline. The most relentless critic that Newman ever had has said of him that "the very severity of the conflict in his own spirit has given him the profoundest sense of any thinker of our day of the perplexities of living man,—the bewilderments of thought, motive and conscience that come of limited and passionful being, bound by law, yet in revolt against the law that binds it."

But it is that word *amid* which shows

us the depth and the patience and the spiritual honesty of the desires that are breathed out in this hymn. Most of us do not pray to be led amid these dark varieties of our inward life. What we pray for is that we be led *out of them* and away from them as soon as possible. We want to have them over. The lighter nature does not ask that he may learn the lesson of the gloom before it departs. But there is none of that in the hymn. The gloom might be of long continuance, as indeed it was; it might deepen, as it did; but the virility and the heroism of prayer were shown in the willingness to do everything except do without the one great fact of guidance amid whatever came. And the prayer was granted. With variations of intensity the uncertainty lasted for twelve long years, but work went on just the same. Amid the gloom, and in spite of the gloom, which would have

brought a weaker soul to absolute inaction, this man held on his way, and proved that "many a good piece of work may be done by a heavy heart," and that

> "Tasks in hours of insight willed
> May be in hours of gloom fulfilled."

We are not to stop working or advancing just because the shadows fall. A young business man, after years of patient labor, came for counsel to a friend, to whom he confided that in spite of all his efforts everything seemed to have come to a standstill, and that for months he had been in great discouragement about his affairs. The friend asked him if even in his discouragement he had kept working all the time. He replied that he had, and the friend brightened (for he had been through it and learned his lesson), and said that he thought probably something

would happen before long. Very shortly the thing happened which justified the working amid the gloom.

"I hate the world for its mystery," said one who could not endure that any gloom should encircle him. It does seem something like a disgrace to a fine mind to discover that it cannot think out its path with precision, but must be led if it is to find its way. It is in this mood that men form those semi-religions which for a little while seem to be more positive simply because they leave out the most troublesome and persistent facts. If we could only realize that darkness is not a disgrace we should accept many of these passages in life with a different spirit. The hymn accepts the experience and asks to learn its lesson. As the phrase "moor and fen" recognizes that there is a "discipline of dulness," the encircling gloom attests that there is

a discipline of darkness in which there are not only conceived, but protected and ripened, many of the choicest fruits of the Spirit. It is quite likely to be a humiliation, but it is not a disgrace. The great spirit accepts it patiently and does not rudely clamor that it be brought to a close, but asks rather what its teaching is. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

To-day there are a great many attempts made to banish the gloom that encircles the soul. We are told that all gloom is morbid, and that it should be taken as a sign that we are out of health. But while there is much in our moods that is morbid, there is a gloom which is not. It is real and it is rational, and it is well for us, and we ought not to brush it away too soon. There could have been no kindness in letting Jacob go before the issue of his soul was thoroughly wrestled out with him.

Let us find out if it is the darkness of sin, of a lifelong mistake in our purpose, and not be willing to go out of it until that is all settled. Let us ask, as the hymn does, that the darkness may not go until it has done its work.

The Distant Scene

THERE never was a time when men's minds were so much on the rack and on the stretch with expectancy as they are to-day. Everybody has turned prophet as to what the future of society will be like; and in the personal life we all entertain more or less definite views as to life's prizes, and which particular prizes we should like to seize. We are eager for advance information; one step is not enough for most of us. We want to see the end from the beginning, and we rather pride ourselves that this is the mark of maturity and the characteristic of a far-seeing soul. But no far-seeing soul ever slights the present. Vision is much needed to-day to enable us to look deeply and richly and comfortingly into

what is right before us. The wonders of the microscope are as great as those of the telescope. Our greatest danger is that we slur and despise what is near.

The wise man long since said that "wisdom is before . . . him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth." Cromwell, for whom the distant scene was as unexpected an experience as a man could undergo, said that "a man never mounts so high as when he knows not whither he aims." And in Newman's hymn, a long and painful process is compressed into a few words as its writer says,

"I do not ask to see the distant scene."

Strong measures are needful for us when the mind has acquired this habit of sliding off instinctively to the distant scene. It becomes like a hand that has lost grip on

the tools it is using. Our energies are never fully employed upon the thing we are doing because a part of them steadily leaks away through that outlet of speculation as to the result. The work before us does not seem to deserve the whole of us. We are not all there. Singleness of mind departs from us, our work betrays that we were thinking of something else, and we destroy the future even as we go toward it. We wonder whether it is safe to let each day's work absorb all our energies. More work is spoiled by this anticipatory habit than we can ever know. The thing before us seems not worth doing well because we have caught sight of some great occasion looming ahead which will deserve all our attention.

The thought of promotion has, indeed, its just and honest place in life, but when indulged too far it secretes a poison which so vitiates all one's work that promotion

becomes impossible. It was only last year that another Oxford man spoke from the midst of his promotions and his honors to urge with all possible earnestness that workers should throw away all ambition beyond that of doing the day's work well. They were to "think not of the amount to be accomplished, the difficulties to be overcome, or the end to be attained, but set earnestly at the little task at one's elbow and let that be sufficient for the day." The worst thing conceivable about the future is that we should come to it empty-handed through having too constantly dwelt upon it.

Our nervous thought about the future may be greatly allayed if we stop to think that we have lived through a great many futures already. Ten years ago we were wondering about ten years hence. To-day is the distant scene of ten years ago. And to-day has no terrors. It is not going

badly; neither is it the romantic scene which we imagined. If it has some successes, they are such as we might have any day. If it has its difficulties, we shall see our way through them. And so it will be as we go on toward the end.

However lyrical this fault may be made to seem as it is expressed in Newman's beautiful phrase, there is no fault which more completely drives the poetry out of our life, for it abolishes all possibility of surprise. The scenes on which we arrive have been emptied beforehand by too incessant thought, so that what to a simpler mind might be a very heaven of new experience finds us already jaded and displeased. God starts every day for us in poetry, but it slowly turns to prose as we watch the clock, or overrun the morning by thoughts of the afternoon, and spoil the afternoon by forecasting the engagements of the evening.

Now, as a matter of fact, the distant scene of a life that lives long is naturally a scene of slowly failing powers, of retirement and lessened activity and influence. But thousands have their usefulness lessened before their time by trying to prepare themselves for the weakness which God has mercifully assigned to a brief period. We need our courage for to-day. Friends around us are undergoing that experience of lessened activity on every side, yet it does not seem a tragedy in their case. We do not count it a failure or a disgrace that they weaken physically at last. If sorrows and trials come which God has ordained should cover but a brief period of life, it is presumption to draw their darkness over days which he meant them never to touch. When we begin to meddle too much with the distant scene we do not prepare ourselves for it as we suppose. We rather unfit ourselves for it by spoiling

days which have been given to us to keep cloudless.

In Newman's own history the distant scene was a plain room in a quiet street on the outskirts of Birmingham. The smoke and grime of the great manufacturing city which hung in the distance made a scene very different from Oxford with the snap-dragon growing on the walls of Trinity. He had said that he liked to think of the snap-dragon which used to grow upon the walls opposite his freshman's rooms at Trinity as being "an emblem of his perpetual residence even unto death in his university." If he had had a sight of the distant scene when he wrote the hymn more than fifty years before, he might have faltered and made impossible those years of work into which he poured himself without knowing what the end would be. Those afternoons at St. Mary's, of which Principal Shairp and

John Keble and Matthew Arnold and Dean Church have written, afternoons which left their mark on many lives, might never have been, and Oxford might have lost one of her greatest influences if Newman had given all his thought to forming his career so as never to leave Oxford. But he did not ask to see the outcome, and, not seeing it, there was made possible to him a half century of labors which grew a step at a time, filled his life with contentment, and let it close in peace.

One Step Enough

THE whole history of many a pessimist may be described by saying that he never appreciated the value of a step, and would not be contented with anything less than a stride. It is the very essence of humility to be willing to do what we can; and it is for want of that willingness that splendid talents have often been desolated, and noble ambitions have sunk down into cynicism and complaint.

In every line of Newman's hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," we read a prayer against restlessness of soul. But restlessness is not the wholly mysterious thing we are often disposed to think, and in one phrase after another he touches the sources from which it springs, and shows us the

points at which we may conquer it. When he says that one step is enough he puts his finger upon one of the most fertile sources of this misery, and that is our natural desire to do more than can be done. Behind the brief, sharp phrase we discern the struggle by which a great talent that longs to change the world at a single stroke has begun to learn its needed lesson, and has humbled itself to take the one step which is all that is open to it.

It is easy and pleasant to dream of power, but it is above all things necessary to remember that power means the acceptance of limitation. It is the nature of explosives that they need to be confined in order to do their work. We cannot show ourselves generous except by narrowing ourselves down to some concrete act which makes that generosity tangible to others. There is plenty of that genial good-nature which, in a very general way, wishes well

to the whole world, but it does not for a moment rank with the willingness to tie one's self up to some particular form of service, and persist in it until it is done. Good causes suffer on every hand because they have too many well-wishers, too many whose good-will we cannot condense and apply to any particular point. The disciples were always offering to do for Christ larger things than he ever asked for, yet they were strangely reluctant to do those smaller and humbler things about which he was so insistent. Their growth in action was a growth in the power to act within narrow limits. All action is, after all, a sort of narrowness. The poet has to accept his meter and bring his vision within bounds, or he remains a dreamer. The meters are his best friends, and they give him his only chance.

Whatever our vision may be, there are always cool and definite steps to be taken

about it, and they are usually of a sort that somewhat chill our enthusiasm. The first step seems almost a profanation; we hold back. Then the ideal which was meant to be the very health of our bones becomes a poison in our system that makes us hate and resist the world. We use the word *ideals* with a shallowness and recklessness that are nothing short of amazing. We seem to think that simply because we have them, all must be well with us, without realizing that the world has a right to demand of the man who has an ideal more labor and sacrifice than of anybody else. We speak of our ideals as if they gave us a sort of exemption from the world's roughness, when the truth is that the man whose ideal amounts to anything knows that he is a candidate for trouble and rough going, and accepts cheerfully the situation.

The ideal that hovered before Newman's mind, however much we may won-

der at it, had this robust quality about it, that, instead of turning his life into a petulant inactivity, it started him upon a course of incessant labor that gave substance and reality to his life.

In his particular case the one step that was open to him is very instructive. It was to make the best of a dead calm that had fallen upon the Mediterranean and held the orange-boat on which he was traveling home drifting helplessly about for days in the Straits of Bonifacio. Seething with schemes and fretting for action as he was, the next step was to make the most of a dead calm. Probably the next step never seemed more distasteful to any man than the one which he had to take. Of what use was it to attempt anything there on shipboard? How could anything done there ever contribute to the great purpose which had laid hold of him? Nevertheless he took the pen, and, master-

ing the pain of beginning,—which is always a sharp twinge to most of us,—he wrote. Probably the one step possible amid limitations never turned out to be more surprisingly fruitful than that which brought forth the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," by which he is known to thousands who never even heard of his more far-reaching schemes.

It is instructive, also, to notice that this phrase seems to hint at some deep temptation in his nature which had to be met and laid again and again. It was only four days later, when the wind had freshened and borne them off Sardinia, that once more he had to apply the brake to his restless spirit, as he does in the poem called "Flowers without Fruit":

"Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong.

"But he who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
And faints at every woe.

"Faith's meanest deed more favor bears
Where hearts and wills are weigh'd,
Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,
Which bloom their hour and fade."

In this and many another allusion of his up to the end of his life there is more than a hint of how, if he had not mastered an infirmity that besets us all, the output of his life might have been "soft, loose and wandering," as Jeremy Taylor calls it, instead of having that beautiful precision and hard-attained ease which came to be the wonder of his words.

In the spiritual life we fail because one step is not enough for us. We sink back deeper into the slough of defeat and lose more ground, because we are too proud after a sin or a lapse to take the poor first

step which is all that is possible toward our recovery. Never prouder than when we have fallen, we sit and dream about some repentance that will seem adequate to so great a fall. The poor unworthy prayer which at the time is all we can utter seems wholly unequal to what we feel. We want to make some large, swift stroke toward our restoration. We wish the days would slip by more quickly. We wish we could live a week at a time in order to arrive sooner at the point from which we have slipped. But one step is enough; and when pride makes us unwilling to take it, we only sink lower and lower until at last no repentance that is possible to us seems worthy of us. St. Theresa has left us one word of wisdom that would change many a life history if thoroughly appropriated once for all: her discovery that after failure it is best to repent at once and in what words and ways one can.

How little any of us know about what is enough! And how assertive we are about what we need! Day after day we have had enough within our reach and have let it go. To realize that we have enough of opportunity, and more than we can ever fill, would be to find contentment coming back again. It would conquer our restlessness if we could look with reverent eyes upon a single day without worrying about any other. The continuance of our life into this present day is an assurance of God's intention to bless. There is not a day nor a duty that may not contribute to life's main purpose. And the Kindly Light has no kindlier leading than that which leads us to taking contentedly one step more as long as we live.

Not Ever Thus

THE pregnant words, "I was not ever thus," may mean no more to us than a man's natural reflection that he is growing older. But they are also the simplest language of conversion. It is not the mark of a great conversion that it makes one garrulous about it. Part of its beauty and power is the way it relieves one of the necessity of talking about himself as much as before. The new accent with which a new soul speaks of everything else tells the story.

We probably know all too little of the intensity with which men long for the power to say just this: "I was not ever thus." And though we live in an age of apparently low expectancy in the matter of spiritual change, it is yet safer to believe that all around us men are longing for

their second birthright of becoming different. Below the surface of conventional life lies a tremendous covetousness of the best gifts. What seems like utter acquiescence in worldliness often hides a deep despair of finding what the inmost soul never quite ceases to desire. Scoff as men may, nothing is more poignantly real to them than the fact that someone whom they know has shaken off the entail of hopeless spiritual monotony and gone over to live in the other side of his being. They wonder why the experience does not come to them. Years ago we all looked for this transition as something that would surely come. But we seem instead to have struck a law of settledness, as if the unseen powers resented change to such an extent that only here and there could some heroic soul wrest the blessing from their hands. Like Moab, "men settle upon their lees, their

taste remaineth in them, and their scent is not changed." They are not poured from vessel to vessel, leaving something of the muddy lees behind, and flashing clearer and more perfect at every change in life's movement. The saddest confession one can make is that he *was* ever thus; that, though his life began with clear and eager and holy hopes of divinely promised changes, it finds the sins of years ago still rampant and powerful.

But still, with splendid and justifying confirmation of the best we have ever hoped, there are lives enough still that are able to sing with meaning the words, "I was not ever thus." Perhaps our trouble is something like that of Elijah in the wilderness when he had fallen out of companionship with the seven thousand others who believed just as he did. We need to keep a steady and deliberate communion with those who have found transformation, and

also to take our longing for it back into the region where it was born. The prevailing interest of the Scriptures is in what God may do in man rather than in what man may do for himself, and back there we dwell in an atmosphere where spiritual wonders are to be expected. Plans for ourselves, devotion to the art of living and the ethics of life, never can raise such warming hopes as those that come around us instinctively and acclimate themselves in the soul when we stand again in that current of God's spirit which streams through the Scriptures.

Happily the great convert has ever felt that he has obtained something which others would demand if they only knew what it meant to him. The joy of it all is not in any marvelousness of its manner, nor in one's having a story to tell to the world, but in the difference it makes to him who receives it. To Newman it came

as a sense of mission in the world which he had never felt before. "I have a work to do in England," was the way he kept putting it to himself. With all the pain and dread of what that mission would bring upon him, there was that deep satisfaction of knowing that his life had been seized and directed to a certain end. Each of us has a work to do in home or factory or office or neighborhood or self, and the moment we are convinced of it is a moment of satisfaction and rest. We can endure turmoil if we know that God has a purpose in sending us into it.

If in Newman's change there was not wanting any element of charm or romance, let that not mislead us. It will be enough for many if they find that after a life of impatience they are now strangely able to wait; for others, that some values in their life have suddenly fallen so that they have seen other values rise to their long lost

place. Splendid indifferences which make one ask "what has come over me?" take their place in life as heralds of still finer enthusiasms for which these indifferences have made room. What would once have seemed an utter breakdown in our ambitions now seems like the first real touch of success.

But the greatest change that can ever happen is that by which a man passes from egoism to love. It is not hate which is love's opposite, but the slow and consuming egoism which all so quietly leaves a life without a neighbor and without a God, without a reason for being, and, finally, without any understanding of what has occurred. John took it for his province to unmake the egoist with the gospel of Christ. The touch of surprise lies like a dawn over the New Testament. "I was not ever thus," is in effect what John is always saying as he thinks that he of all men

should ever have come to love the brethren. And we wonder now and then at our own coarseness which has turned Paul into the hardest of dogmatists and forgotten the childlike surprise that never left him, as he thought of what, by the grace of God, he had become.

Life is gloriously at the mercy of such things, though we can never tell when they will come. The thing for us to do is to let the tune get running in the mind and all along the heart. For once that they come as on the Damascus road, they come a thousand times through some "chance" word of a friend or even through a silence where we should have expected speech. Some "accident" sets us in a different angle toward life. A word out of the Bible, heard a thousand times before, suddenly glows with significance and makes its appeal; or quite as often some word whose meaning we do not grasp will fol-

low us and recur to us, we cannot see why, until at length we turn to lay hold on what has so unmistakably laid hold on us, and so we close in with a new experience. We are not as safe against such things as we think, for

> "Just when we're safest there's a sunset touch,
> A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides—
> And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
> As old and new at once as Nature's self
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul."

Those to whom the great transition has come are united in saying that no effort of theirs ever fully accounted for its coming. But to do nothing about it only sets us in a more hopeless attitude toward it. Struggle always serves to convince us of the royal way it takes when it comes. The wind bloweth where it listeth, but we live over toward the encouraging side of this truth when we have learned how surely

and steadfastly the Spirit listeth toward every man who longs for his power. Effort toward anything begets affinity, and best of all, "affinity has a trick of turning into identity." Some day the touch of change is there, and the one who holds on and really finds it, looks back upon all his efforts as little enough in comparison with what he has found. And we never feel so natural as when we have been changed.

But Now Lead Thou Me On

THE mood of surrender is so commonly misrepresented to us as a tame and spiritless one that we often miss altogether the immense relief which is the chief mark of the greatest spiritual changes. There is, it is true, a kind of yielding to God which seems to exhaust all the strength and leave one afterward in a state of mere resignation, but there is also such a thing as passionate surrender in which men feel that they cannot too soon be done with all that they have left behind or too soon fare forward to enter upon what God has in store for them. And it is the giving up of this animated kind rather than something plaintively devotional which seems to me to be expressed in every line of the hymn if one will only test it with

the stronger interpretation rather than the weaker one.

Those words "*But now*" seem to mark a clean break with the old order of life as with something wholly unsatisfying. There is no hint of anything in the past that one might regret to lose. It does not sound like the utterance of one who is seeking divine guidance as a last resort, but rather like the word of one who welcomes an entire change of control as an unspeakable relief. It sounds like the conviction of one who has everything to gain and little to lose, and as there is no hint of death there is no hint of any great sacrifice to be made. No suggestions of a rich past to be broken with or high ambitions to be forsaken, but just a great relief and a great release from a mistaken way and misleading hopes. Certainly it is not a monastic hymn which longs for retreat from the world into some hermitage as if

one never wanted to see the world again. To seize life again and in the spirit which makes it worth while, is the result that is set before the mind and the hope. We shall never appreciate the great surrenders until we appreciate what a relief it was to those who made them to be done with their old life. The relief is the great thing in them all.

However much thought and planning may have gone to the forming of our plans for life, there often comes slowly over the mind a suspicion that after all life is not getting on. Many a definite end for which we strove may have been successfully achieved, many of its prizes may have been won, and yet leave us with the feeling that they have in no wise advanced us in the real purpose of life. A curious sense of defeat and standstill often comes to men who are quite thoroughly getting all they asked for. Things have gone as

they wished, but something is left out and they do not understand nor do they like the only explanation which has ever explained what the trouble is. For guidance is not the first thing that most of us think about in mapping out our lives, and how a well thought out plan, perfect at all points, can ever come to nothing in any man's hands is a possibility one does not think of until he is compelled to do it.

Encouraged early in life to be definite in purpose and to consider what we wish our life to be, many have seemed to start in life advantaged above others by the ambitious and resolute line they have struck out for themselves. They wondered at the apparent looseness with which others let life shape itself for them. With sharp and well-defined notions of the circumstances under which their nature would work best, or what influences they required for their best work, they arranged life, if

they could, so as to exclude the things that did not contribute to such an end. Leaving nothing to chance, thinking it enough to have a well-formed plan and then ask God's blessing upon it, many have failed to see how there could be room for much else until, in the very midst of their successful programme, there would fall some sudden and subtle sense of failure and disillusion which challenged everything and brought life to a standstill just when, to the eyes of the world, they seemed to have everything before them. Some never understand what has happened, and go on, somewhat saddened but without trying to find out what it means, but others become convinced in such a crisis that God is trying to get their attention, and they give it. Interest in their own lives, which they thought principally a matter confined to themselves, is quickened in every direction by this sudden revelation that God has

more interest in their lives than they themselves can ever have. They find that they have sincerely mistaken their province, that is all, and walking some distance discover that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. But everything yet remains open to the soul that is sensitive enough to feel and acknowledge all this and frankly say "But now, lead Thou me on."

The fault lay not so much in the definiteness of the plan as in the indefiniteness of the place in it which was assigned to God. Sooner or later, if that be left to chance, a life-purpose is bound to pall upon us or else it will result in some disaster. "I have been reading," said a watchful old saint, "the lives of a number of persons of eminent usefulness, and I find that none of them was good for much until he had laid aside his ambition to be a great and notable person and had left it to God to determine what he was to be." "But

now, lead Thou me on" was, virtually, the prayer of Thomas Chalmers at the turning of his ministry when his great effectiveness began. Thought out as his course had been, and planned according to his own ideas of what was best for him to undertake, he came to that familiar arrest of life which comes to so many men, in which he found that though everything was going much as he had planned, his life was simply not getting on. There was plenty of movement in it, but it was the movement of the eddy rather than that of the main current. Then with all frankness, as one glad to be done with a bad business, he said of all those former triumphs of his that if they ever did any soul any good it was more than he ever got any account of. It was not the breakdown of his purpose, it was rather the discovery that he had none worthy the name. Intense relief marked his surrender, while

all the freshness and invention, the new ways and the romance and adventure of Christian service began only after he had left it all to God as to what he was to do and what he was to become.

"Lead Thou me on" is the voice of relief and liberty, not of breakdown and misery. To realize that life was not meant to direct itself and that no life was ever able to do it to any high achievement, is to find that flexibility and fine carelessness which are just what the soul needs for its best work, but cannot have so long as it submits to the rigor of a plan which is all its own. God's limitations are really a loosening and freeing of those which we impose upon ourselves. We are always cramping ourselves, and yet always fearing that God will do it if we yield ourselves to him in complete surrender. Limitations there are in the way of the Kindly Light, but they are mostly of the

kind that increase a hundred fold our efficiency, our peace, and our freedom. And when we have sought them and won them we shall not have a doubt about what is the chief element in surrender to guidance. We shall know that it is not a crushed but an emancipated will, not a mood of resignation, but the feeling that we have never lived till now.

The Garish Day

COMING from a great soul, a single phrase will often be fuller of revelation than whole chapters from a lesser one, and in this one swift phrase where he speaks of loving the garish day, Newman opens up to us the perpetual struggle of the heart with vanity, ambition and pride. No one is justified in assuming to know just what in the way of definite personal experience lay behind these words as they came from him, but where they match with such perfect expression experiences which come to us all, we use them for our own confession, and find relief in the clean-cut and beautiful way in which they say for us what it is hard to say for ourselves.

What else can the garish day mean to us than that state of living upon the sur-

face in which we brush away the insistent claim of the deeper things within us and make ourselves believe that life is only what it seems or what we would like to think it is? It speaks for those who know that they do not want to know what is below the surface if what is on the surface is to their present liking. It suggests to us that even a life that may seem to have parted with all show and pretense may yet more deeply, because more subtly, than others be overcome by the world. There is the frank worldliness which deceives neither one's self nor anyone else, but worldliness comes to its worst and produces its most tragic results in lives whose restraint and refinement seem to have put them beyond the influence of the lower aims and motives. In such a life as Newman's, it is hard to conceive that any valuation of things which could ever so remotely be called tawdry could have

found a place, but whenever a soul goes up into seeing other and higher values, it can hardly describe those which it has forsaken as anything but poor and cheap.

It is a sharp phrase, and one could scarcely say a more convicting word about the quality of his past motives and judgments. We shrink from owning to ourselves the degree to which we have looked upon showy things as the only things eventful or important, or how we have secretly despised whatever came to us without the mark of standing or success. How often we have listened to words from a famous man which we would have dismissed instantly if they had come from one less-known and less-regarded. The world which we have to overcome is very largely that world of reputations, where we estimate the value of things by the note and the fame that go with them. Perhaps we pride ourselves on our love of excel-

lence without realizing how little of it we ever found in the out-of-the-way places where most of it always exists. How much we love and how far we are loyal and devoted to someone who is utterly out of the way and can never recompense us, might almost be said to test the reality of our affections.

This love of the garish day vitiates work and spoils the workman. If

> "High heaven rejects the lore
> Of nicely calculated less or more,"

how many services must have gone for nothing in the spiritual world because of our too shrewd taking the measure of occasions and opportunities and our cool decisions about how much of ourselves it was worth while to put into them. Service becomes a thing that chills all our power and spirit if we become engrossed in estimating too exactly how far it is likely to be

successful or add to our own upbuilding. Personal influence may be the aim of one who works in such a spirit, but he will never achieve it because he will never find its secret. As a great educator has said, "the secret of work is to be lavish of personal influence, to put a great deal of yourself into whatever you do," and until one has learned that secret he cannot be thoroughly at his own disposal. Because he is not in the habit of giving generously whenever he gives at all, his power will not abound when at last what he thinks the great occasion has really come. That solid joy and deep contentment and inspiration which God meant a man's work to give, and without which life can have no joy at all, is gradually lost to those who have lived too long in the garish day of reputations, promotions and rewards.

It is said of Newman that he preached as well at his village charge of Littlemore

as he did in his greater post at St. Mary's. That whole group of men who led the Oxford Movement were men who were done with the garish day. As the Master of Balliol said of them in the sermon on Tait, "they derived their influence chiefly from their regardlessness of themselves and of their own interests: a gift which, in times of apathy and indifference to religion, alone possesses the power of recalling men's hearts to it." The favorite adjective of that great friend of Newman's, Dean Church, when he wished to give very high praise, was the word "unshowy," and wherever his influence prevailed there was a feeling of reality in the moral atmosphere. The language of both Newman and Church always bore this mark of unshowiness. Garishness of any kind was the one thing which both of them would have dreaded. Rewards became distasteful to both, though they lived

in a world keenly alive to the matter of promotion, and a world where either might almost have asked what he would and have obtained it.

Everywhere and all the time men are breaking with the old conventional life and growing weary of their garish day. Some announce it in some sharp and decisive change in their manner of life, and others by slowly and gradually changing their valuations of life, and ceasing to care for or to serve the purposes which once dominated all. Nothing does us more good than to hear of one of those marked conversions where some life swings squarely around and still shows us how possible the change is for us all. But the great conversion inspires many quieter and unnoticed ones where the change is gradual though just as complete. When we are freed from the bondage of convention we may go on living as usual in most of

the common outward forms without any wholesale and spectacular overturning, and certainly without turning in sudden contempt upon the life that prevails around us. In two-thirds of their life, those who are living in the new spirit will live very much like those around them, but it is what happens in the other third that makes the difference of a whole new world. The poet who said "Good-by, proud world, I'm going home," was afterward seen for many years living with growing grace and power in the very midst of that same proud world. The change had happened in himself. The garish day is not some fault in the structure of the world around us: it is something in ourselves. The escape from it is not into the deserts, but into a world that is full of real presences and more incentives than we ever felt before.

Remember Not Past Years

IT is not too much to say that Christianity stands or falls with what it is able to say to us about the redemption of a false start. All freshening of our life, and all new daring and endeavor is made possible by the belief that much may be done about the past. And those who hold most resolutely to that early creed in which pardon seemed the most living possibility are best fitted to meet all that the coming years may bring. For the chief thing that they bring is an ever-lengthening past.

Our attitude toward the past is the most decisive thing in our daily life. Men are not the hurrying and heedless creatures they seem to be, for many who appear to be utterly regardless of past years are

none the less living with them every moment. The very haste and gaiety that makes us suppose they never give it a thought is often simply an effort to escape from the past; and they are massing it up against themselves the more hopelessly by the very eagerness of their flight. Unless we take courageous action toward life's arrearages in some daily prayer which lowers their hostile power, they accumulate until we are in despair. This prayer "remember not past years" is not, then, simply for those who are regretting some period far back in life which was notably bad. Our yesterdays need to be dealt with as much as past years. Our failures are so recent, and our blunders are so fresh, that every day we need to recur to the way in which Christ handled men's past, lest our lives become darkened and discouraged.

Nothing is easier than to depict the

power of the past in terms that are ghostly and frightful. It lends itself easily to those who wish to work up some lurid impression. But we are no longer greatly affected by the lurid, and may as well confess that its day is done. How sanely Christ deals with the past! He neither minimizes its seriousness nor dwells upon its awfulness, but mostly by just a healthy touch loosens men from its control. Before him the years that seemed so irreparable lose their tyranny, while the entail of evil upon men's lives is suddenly broken and they go free. And this happens not only in the case of the worst evildoers, but quite as wonderfully among those whose past does not seem to have been bad at all. The change in Peter, as we follow him through to the end, is a greater change than that in the restored demoniac.

One feels like asking what there could

be in a life like Newman's, which from earliest years had yielded to the holiest influences, that could cause this sudden revulsion against his former life. It was certainly not flagrant and rememberable transgression, but rather that disgust at what seemed to him his "low-vaulted past," an experience that has the power to give us more pain than any single act of wrong can produce. We feel our worst not over some downright offense which is evident to everybody, but over that deep, pervasive sense of wrong about which no other soul will ever accuse us. Every one has definite sins whose remembrance will give him tears to the end of his days; and yet our most poignant regret will come through realizing that life was ruled by motives and ambitions, and lived in a spirit, which now seem incredible to us.

The flash that shows us our vanity, our stupidity, our pride, with the poor little

satisfactions that have contented us hitherto, and the pitiful prizes for which we were willing to strive, is what makes us pray this prayer for utter disconnection with the years when such things were possible. One has known men who were never brought to shame by any of their most definite evil-doings, who have yet broken down and repented of all their wrong together when God has brought suddenly home to them the uselessness of their past years. Startled at the spirit in which we have persistently been living, dismayed at the way we have taken our life and estimated our opportunities, some of us through sharp and sudden experiences, and others of us through long-continued discipline, pray that God will remember not past years. Then the past no longer overwhelms us and the years stand back. God may henceforth use them as his text-book out of which to teach us, but he will never

allow them to fill our lives simply with regrets.

Christ handled men's past and pardoned it. And though, after the natural fashion, the bystanders often asked him whether he was acquainted with the full evil of those whom he freely forgave, he showed with just a single word (where others would have dwelt long upon the offender's past) that he always knew and refused to notice it any further.

We pray "remember not past years" because we have caught sight of something better. The prayer itself is a sort of triumph, for it is when we are most desirous of being delivered out of the past years that they have most truly begun to do their work. It is not because the sin and failure of them suddenly mount up in such a mass that we see of what sort they are. Evil itself never does any such thing. It has no self-revealing power. It simply

keeps on and on until it begets the belief that it is not evil, or persuades us that the test of life is changed.

Elsewhere Newman puts the same thought in prose, and says, "It is strange to say, but it is a truth which our own observation and experience will confirm, that when a man discerns in himself most sin and humbles himself most, when his comeliness seems to him to vanish away and all his graces to wither, when he feels disgust at himself, and revolts at the thought of himself—seems to himself all dust and ashes, all foulness and odiousness—then it is that he is really rising in the kingdom of God, as it is said of Daniel, 'From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard; and I am come for my words.'"

It is the good pleasure of God that men everywhere should make great requests

and seek first the things that are seemingly impossible. Prayer is a realm where we must ask for the highest at once and the lesser things afterwards. If this be so, no prayer could more truly measure up to Christ's standard than the one that is breathed forth in the words, "Remember not past years." This is asking for everything at once and this is the asking that most makes us at home with our Father. In our earlier years we have an instinct that this is so. Is it because we have become wiser or more deeply instructed in divine knowledge that, as the years go on, we hesitate over such a prayer as if it were too much?

How swift and courageous is the spirit which refuses to be dominated by the worst that its own heart tells it, but rather asks God for everything in asking him to forget and forgive all the past! Naming no terms, making no promises even, dwell-

ing upon no particular transgression, it simply cries for release from the whole mistaken self; and that is the most acceptable prayer that we can offer. For thousands who are limiting the Most High by allowing themselves no brighter future than their past would dictate, nothing is so much needed as the daring to pray once more one of these great simple prayers with which the gospel begins. By the use of them the power of the gospel continues with us, and if, as fast as new needs and new light and new repentances come to us, we will just keep on praying them, then for us the gospel shall never have an end.

So Long Thy Power Hath Blest Me

WHEN we take a new start in life we usually do it by going back to something that was in our lives long ago. The new start is seldom as new as it seems, for it nearly always begins with looking backward from a present bad condition to a better one which was ours years ago, and saying to ourselves that if such things were possible to us once, they must in some degree be possible still.

These fresh beginnings in our lives do not come out of the air. They have their roots in the past which we too often call the irreparable past, forgetting that one of the most irreparable things in it is the good which, whether we would or no, God

introduced into our lives long since and made a part of us forever. Little as we asked for it, and little as we have been conscious of it, God was storing our lives with good things to which some day we would return in hours of need, to find that the work of Providence has quite as much to do with preparing a past as with taking care of the future. Wherever, then, anyone is encouraged to believe that better things are still possible to him, it is almost always from the fact that better things have been that he draws his inspiration. We move forward for the most part just as Israel did, because it remembered again something it had almost forgotten. Its hope grew stronger as its memory became quicker. Faith had its accumulations as well as doubt and whenever their memories were freshened, their hopes also revived. It could not be that he that had brought them out of the land of Egypt,

out of the house of bondage, had finished with them.

Our vanished youth! Is there any such thing? Does not all our education proceed on the conviction that this is just what cannot completely vanish? Does not every parent who knows how things come back to us, make haste to fill the mind of his child with the most beautiful things that can be put there, because he knows himself the wonder of how those things return? Life has no surer fund to draw upon than the days of our youth. They come back to us with their zeal, their earnestness, and their belief, compelling us to think that we cannot have parted utterly with days like those. To life's latest hour they represent a man to himself better than anything else, and he cannot part with all they tell him though sophistry and cynicism should do their worst. They come back to us a thousand

times, with what power God only knows, recalling us, inciting us, and pointing out to us until the end, something of the better path.

The way of advance, then, is chiefly a way of remembrance. In deep discouragement, when the future seems quite dark, what holds us to our course more often than anything else is the thought of the past and how long the power has blessed us. John Newton in another familiar hymn gave expression to the same thought in the lines:

> And can He have taught me
> To trust in His name,
> And thus far have brought me
> To put me to shame?

Permanent discouragement becomes impossible to us when we fairly and fully look at what God has done for us in the past. It is this determined look at the

guidance already given that stops these moods which sometimes sweep down upon us and make us feel our day is done. And though our gloom is often a very determined mood and has a self-pitying joy of its own sometimes, the past just asserts itself and carries us straight away out of our depression and makes it untenable.

It is not for any of us who can still use the gift of memory to treat ourselves as propositions with whom God has quite finished, and when we doubt and sag in our moral life it is not because we have found some greater truth, but simply because we have forgotten something.

Yet our advance is not simply in remembering and in going back to what we remember. That we cannot do. We go forward with it, re-incarnating it in fresh undertakings, or else we become reactionaries and literalists whose memory is their undoing and blocks all their progress.

For such the way of remembrance is not a way of advance but an arrest of life. Their memories produce no hopes because they must inevitably despair of ever carrying the world back to ensconce it in the mould of any past day. They would keep theology at a standstill when it ought to be the freshest and most glowing and vital of the sciences. But though we cannot copy our literal past, we may catch its tune and march to its music into whatever lies before us. In a very real sense we keep proving the truth of the saying, that "we only learn that which we already know." We may know it very badly, very roughly, but we keep on knowing it better and better. And when we speak of the irreparable past, let us swing the emphasis over more strongly upon the irreparable and undying good which God introduced into it long ago. Memory is one of the principal domains of the Holy Spirit, and the

man without a memory finds it very hard to start afresh.

So the new start in life is never quite so new as it seemed. Almost everything that we shall ever have to do we shall find that at some time or other we have already done. Is it a habit to be broken? We can never forget a period long ago when we fought it successfully. Is it a state of mind and feeling which we need? We remember one glad summer when the state prevailed. If it is truth we need, it most commonly gleams out of some old Scripture which has been with us all our days.

Many a disheartened preacher needs nothing so much as to tell himself something that he has told his people many a time. It is related of Bishop Wilkinson that once when out walking with a friend he gave way to a mood of the deepest discouragement and anxiety. The friend instantly quoted to him one of his own ut-

terances with which he had inspired others years before, and the Bishop stopped and said in great surprise, "Did I say that? That is just what I need." To realize how long and how often God has led us is difficult, and the scene successfully traversed is apt to be clouded by the present doubt and distress, but every one with the faith to see it can find enough Providence in his past to put him in courage for the future.

So the most progressive life is that which has the greatest power of holding true to something in it which lies far back in the days that are gone. Quiet, faithful and penetrating are those other words of Newman's where he says: "What is commonly admired as successful talent is far more a firm realizing grasp of some great principle, and that power of developing it in all directions and that nerve to abide faithful to it, which is involved in such a

true apprehension." Our standstills are due far less to the failure to invent some new course than to our need of developing some old truth in some new direction. When the soul really remembers, it always starts afresh.

O'er Moor and Fen

ONE of the interesting influences which have been quietly gathering volume and importance of late years is what may be called the praise of the desert. It has all come about so quietly—as was appropriate to such an influence—that it has fortunately escaped notice and talk, and we have been free to enjoy it without being told too many reasons why we ought to. To-day the desert, the prairies, the moor and fen have all found their spokesmen, who are swiftly reclaiming for our thought the whole geography of the uneventful. If we class together territories as unlike as the desert and the fertile marsh, it is because they all belong to the apparently uneventful. They tell us of strange joys which draw

men back to these regions when they might go free; of secret eventfulness where it seemed as if nothing could happen, and a wealth of color behind what at first appears hopelessly gray. From Lanier's "Marshes of Glynn," with their width of welcome and their spirit of healing, through Hardy's "Return of the Native," with the very essence and spirit of the moors, and on to many other works of the same purpose, there has been accumulating a whole literature in praise of the barren tract which is now sufficiently large to be made almost a class of its own.

It would seem as if there were none too many waste places in the world to last out man's long history and supply his thoughts. The very thought of them lets the wearied and hurried spirit out into ampleness, and the future will doubtless reveal more and more of what these wide

spaces may do for the human spirit. The ocean cannot be encroached upon but upon the desert man is already looking with envious eyes. If, as is just possible, it may gradually disappear, the literature of it has begun none too soon. Our thought will always need it.

It is easy to come under the real spell of these regions through a book, but how is it about the spiritual counterpart of it all in the plentiful desert regions which are in every human life? The spiritual world as well as the physical has its mountains, its forests, its rich valleys, its streams, but it has also its moors and fens, its bleak stretches and the "sandy tract." A creative soul will not be content with a romantic interest in literal deserts explored by someone else, but will feel an eager curiosity toward the vacant ranges of his own soul. Can we go to work and discover, point for point in our own wilder-

ness, the saving and ennobling elements of which we have heard, or shall it be only another's desert that is glorious?

In a single day the desert may be set at our doors and put the soul upon that battle with vacancy and dreariness which for many is the most heroic battle they can fight. Sorrow and bereavement will in a day place the desert in the midst of the richest life. Yesterday, life was populous and stirring; to-morrow, action may be suddenly palsied, its incentive all gone. Perhaps creativeness is never more deeply put to the test than when sorrow has suddenly swept out of existence the prospects which were almost as living scenery to our toil. Some never recover to take a real hold of life again: their life takes out of the desert only its grayness; while others, from the same experience, enter into a new and chastened richness, taking out of the desert period that wealth

of color which is one of the most wonderful of the desert revelations.

Less tragically the soul may in a very brief space drop from its rich and fertile experiences to level and uneventful passages. A piece of work concluded and out of one's hands leaves one, as it were, somewhat out; other things press to be done, and for a while one realizes sadly that it is not his turn now. Such things as these are even more likely to be the reactions of the richer nature than of the poorer. When they occur it seems as if life had almost ceased to be valid. We feel excluded from the festival of life, which seems to have swept off in another direction, from whence its sounds come floating to us as if to make our station seem utterly deserted and profitless. We are tempted to end such a situation at almost any cost. There is a very familiar type of character which always feels that the real things are

happening somewhere else, and is unable ever to feel itself central or believe in itself as a modest center around which God would form a new set of things. Perhaps most of us are incapable of that stout self-belief of Thoreau's which made him, when not getting much mental headway, drop it all and say that it was just as important for the thoughts that they should find him as it was that he should find them. He trudged on through the woods, bothered no more about his thoughts and felt quite sure that there were plenty of them and that sooner or later they would want some such chance of incarnation as himself. Gray days never frightened him, but for a good many of us they are full of the possibility of panic when we need to take to ourselves Paul's humane injunction, "Do thyself no harm."

Newman, on the threshold of his greater years, prayed for help when such a period

should come to him. It was long in coming. The years immediately succeeding his hymn were rich with excitements, but at last the moor and fen came to him. In a day he stepped down from old friendships, old incentives, high influence and a central place in the world's thought, and passed out upon those forgotten years in which the world hardly knew where he was or what he was doing, and thought him gone. His prayer seems to have been answered, for over the moor and fen of obscure years he passed into life and influence and power and a place in the great world again. Those years witnessed the setting free of gifts greater than he had ever employed before: if they witnessed the temptation to panic or the temptation to give up any large claim upon life, they witnessed also the victory over such temptations. Newman came out all the richer from these perils of the wilderness

against which so many offer no resistance at all.

In our crowded and hurried days it was just exactly this situation of calm and uneventfulness in which we promised ourselves that here we would for once really be ourselves, and perform the "tasks in hours of insight willed." Now, can we do them? It is a serious question. A lodge in some vast wilderness,—how often it has haunted us with its delights! But, actually finding one such, we almost inevitably suspect that it is not the right one. It is easy to feel with Obermann among the bleak rocks of Imenstrôm, or Rousseau "in his last solitary retirement on the lake and island of Bienne, with his dog and boat," but it is another matter to be one's own recluse and live up to one's own advantages. For advantages there are, just as we thought, but we must be equal to waiting through the silences. When they

begin to break, they will give place to voices to which we shall hardly know how to cease listening, to companionship which we can never afterward forego.

The soul may well pray for help in these periods of life, lest, deceived by the apparent monotony, it turn impatiently away and miss their richness. They ought to be met with delicate insight and reverence and patience. We ought not to feel ashamed of them when they are interposed. There is just below their surface a mysterious fulness, as in the crowded life there is a mysterious and awful emptiness at times. If we could know the whole psychology of the great recluse probably its chief characteristic would be the real crowdedness of his mind, so that when he is compelled to come back into the world it must always seem as into a somewhat less populous place, while the crowded life, with all its apparently

greater opportunity in the way of events, may remain after all terribly empty, just as a glass held under too strong a flow of water will catch none at all.

Coplestone, meeting Newman on one of his solitary walks outside of Oxford, said to him, "Never less alone than when alone." Such is the spiritual account of these unpretentious stretches in our life, as we are usually aware after they are over. We realize it when our course lies once more in the thick of affairs and we promise ourselves great things if ever we get the liberty of them again. If the liberty of them is now with us let us make no haste to end it, but remember the old hopes we had of it, wait patiently through its preliminaries and surface experience, and rejoice in this challenge and invitation of a greater life.

O'er Crag and Torrent

THE crag and torrent time is full upon us. Men have sung of the crag and torrent with some vague and pleasing glimpse of cataract and mountain, who were utterly missing and even complaining of their equivalents in personal and social life. Now that the thing we were singing about is here we do not talk about it in quite the same vein in which we sing about it. What looks so alluring and romantic in the hymn is nothing more nor less than what we are all experiencing to-day, and of which we are complaining that there is no poetry in it. But one of the chief dangers of any time is that we shall miss its meaning, that much shall happen and our souls not observe it, that inspiration shall be moving and yet escape us because we are dreaming of a

former or a future time. What our age needs is not so much that it shall end as that it shall find souls that are strong enough to take and interpret its full inspiration. The crag and torrent time will not last forever for any of us, and we can already imagine how, when it is gone, we shall

> ". . . wish its agitations back,
> And all its thwarting currents of desire;
> Then I shall praise the heat which then I lack
> And call this hurrying fever, generous fire."

For the dangers and temptations of our times we have spokesmen enough and to spare, but one has moments when he feels that even this hurrying age is one of the days which the Lord has made and that we might rejoice and be glad in it. We say many insincere things about the times in which we live. Such sayings are handed on with little thought or interpretation from lip to lip. Few stop to ask

whether their judgment is only hearsay or a sound conviction. We are all more or less tired, that is true, but then we are a great deal more than tired. The times are noisy, but not one of us is disturbed by the particular contribution of noise which he himself is making toward the general tumult. God is trying men to-day with crowds as once for a thousand years he tried them with cloisters, and our present situation, of which we often bitterly complain, is the very situation which, ages ago, monks were praying might come, a time in which faith would be strong enough to be taken out into the world to fight its battles there. The cloister furnished one of the sharpest disciplines the human soul ever endured. Let it be enough that the generations to whom it was given did endure it, without our wishing that we had it back.

The quieter times of a generation ago

have a glamour about them which was no glamour to those who were in them. Were men producing such marvels of conduct and literature and social life in 1872, for example, that any of us should wish to go back to them? Israel kept talking about going back to Egypt, but it was chiefly talk, and it is very doubtful if they could have made themselves do it after they had drawn a full breath of the great spiritual adventure which was leading them on. Samuel Rutherford, when the crag and torrent times are fully on with him, bringing their experiences of conflict and persecution, sighs and says that the very sparrows under the eaves of his old village church of Anwoth are more happy than he. But he lives to change his mind, and to confess that for him "a mixed life is best." The city minister has moments when it would seem like heaven to be back in the quiet country ministry with which

he began; but the truth is that he simply could not endure the consequent closing up of a hundred channels through which now he is finding more life, though with the invariable accompaniment of more life, some weariness and pain. George Herbert seems the fairest picture in the world of a man making the glad exchange of court and crowd for the quiet life as he takes the tiny charge of Bemerton to work and pray among the silences; but there were times when the moor and fen became almost unbearable in the tax which they put upon his spirit. Then we find Herbert questioning God as to whether it would not be better after all for him to receive some promotion and go up into more varied service. One of our present-day writers deliberately took himself out of the world for a term of years to meditate in the country, that his message might take form without the touch of haste or pres-

sure. Now that he has come back and given it to us, one can only say that, good as it is, it is nowise marvelously better than that of many others who gave us theirs out of the very heart of the cities and the crowds. For solitude is not a mechanical thing, but a spiritual, and one may master it for himself with very little in the way of outward helps. The quietest place in the world is not in some lonely glen where the silence is so great that you can hear it, but just around the corner from the noisiest thoroughfare. A woman who fled New York for an isolated farm, and found the most complete mechanical solitude, said that in those awful days her feelings made more noise than a whole elevated road, so that she and her husband had to come back to New York in search of peace. They found it in a little store just off the great track of business, where "she could lean back on the great city around her and

let the million hands of her fellow-beings lift her surely into peace."

We have been saying many shallow and unconsidered things about this crag and torrent time. We say many of them simply because we think we ought to, and we withhold many glorious things we might say because we do not quite know whether it would be right to say them until we know better what the general drift of opinion is. We have seen the obvious things about our age, and, as with every other time, they have been discouraging enough; but it is getting nearly time to set some of the less obvious truths to music. It is quite likely, too, that our careless talk about our present experience is more burdensome than the experience itself. The world's speed is never so fast but that our talk can outrun it, and we all know how the idea of going a mile to do some errand is really more burdensome

than the mile itself, which is likely to prove rather refreshing.

Let one and another stand up and tell the truth, which is that he never was so much of a man as he has been since he got pushed out upon this great current of activity. Let him confess that he has tapped new levels of endurance and discovery, of ability and service, of joy and courage whose existence he never suspected until this time began. Let him tell how his life, which used to follow whim and preference, he has now learned to order here and there like a general so that it does what he intends it to do. He will acknowledge that never in his life did he find so much occasion for prayer or so much necessity for it as now. He is tired, yes, but he is so much more than that. He has to go faster than he did, but he can remember times when he longed for something to drive him faster. He has not

used half so much faith at any time in his life as he does now when he has to use it or go under. Let us tell the truth, each for himself, and many of us can no longer sincerely repeat the shallow conventionality that this materialistic age is the deathblow to faith; we shall be saying that it is a new and splendid epoch of it.

This is not the hymn of one who is weary of life, but of one who is taking measures against growing weary. He prays that each experience as it comes shall find him with a soul open to all it brings of truth and beauty and discipline and power. The greatest danger of each stage will be the temptation to slur it over, to think it is without significance, to miss its richness, and to recognize no guiding hand. "Each age can claim its sacred task but once."

And with the Morn Those Angel Faces Smile

THUS far it has been comparatively easy to parallel each of the sharply etched phrases of the hymn with some familiar experience of our own, but the last two lines do not so readily suggest their counterpart in our ordinary life. What were the angel faces which he had loved long since and lost awhile? Up to the present day explanations continue to be offered about this most mysterious of all the metaphors which Newman employs. And yet, strangely enough, it is this very line which is least clear in its meaning which has been most eagerly seized upon as the one which yields the very motive of the hymn. These lines have determined the prevailing use of the hymn as a hymn of bereavement

and sorrow. Newman himself, as is well known, refused to put any interpretation upon them and pleaded the poet's privilege of a mystical glimpse here and there which he did not care to make more definite. But the general mind fastened most readily upon the future reunion of friends as the experience to which the lines refer, and it is this idea which has settled the popular interpretation of the entire hymn.

But as I said in the beginning, death is an experience to which the hymn never refers. Newman's friends were still around him in almost unbroken circle. Those inspirers of his life of whom, with their special gifts, he has given us such clear and beautiful account in the *Apologia*, were still in the full tide of their strength. Men coveted his company and sought his influence. He had more than heart could wish. What then could he mean by the faces loved long since and lost awhile?

Being left to our own choice of explanations, I think the most familiar one is the best. And besides being the most consistent with all the rest of the hymn, it has for me the added charm of being the one which was given me in Hursley Vicarage, where Newman had been a constant guest. From that Vicarage John Keble had gone up to Oxford to preach the Assize Sermon with which the Oxford Movement began, and it was there that he met Newman again as he came straight from the journey on which he had composed his hymn. The explanation which lingered in the Vicarage was the one which connects the lines with Christ's word about the children whose "angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." With poets like Keble, who drew much of his inspiration from children, there persisted the fancy that even in infancy they felt the influence of angels and showed it by their

smiles. In after years the visions would cease and fade for a time into the light of common day. Then would come on a space like that which intervened between Jacob's first vision at Bethel and that far distant day when, after many a reverse and many a disloyalty, his earliest and best ambitions stirred again and drew him toward home. In that intermediate time he seemed to lose all sense of his first purpose, which was to become the priest of his race, but when he returned the angels met him again. The morn on which they met him was followed by a night when he felt the might of the angel's hand without seeing the angel's face, and on that night he learned that celestial influences may mean war and struggle in a human life quite as much as peace and blessedness. But with the morn Jacob answered once more, after all the years which now seemed few and evil to him, to the purpose

which had gripped him first. He found that the purpose concerning him had not changed.

The expression, then, which seemed to have only to do with the future life turns out to have everything to do with a most pressing question of our daily life. We know that sins may be forgiven, but will visions be given back? When so much of life has been mistaken and misspent, can the influences which once moved us to all that is noblest return to do their old work again? Can forgiveness be not only the blotting out of the past, but the bringing to light of an earlier writing which the past has nearly erased from the soul? There is no gospel which we can have the heart either to tell or to hear, unless it is true that life may be seized again by its earlier purpose even after that purpose may seem to have been almost cancelled. It comes again. In most lives it has to come

again. Sins may be forgiven and visions may be given back. So what looked for a moment like the vaguest part of the hymn becomes solid and inspiring as we find in it this quiet assumption that what we began with we may by God's good grace end with, no matter how long and dreary the tract that lies between. There was an early comrade of Newman's who afterward went another way, who has told us that through a stormy and often disappointing career he held on until he reached his goal by saying to himself in season and out of season that "that which a man desires in his youth he shall in his age see as much of as he will."

The doubt as to whether we shall see lost friends again is slight as compared with the doubt as to whether we who have lost so much of fineness and faith can ever see our own life again as it used to look in the hopes and purposes which we

loved long since and lost awhile. Reunion with faded interests and lost ideals and possibilities, of which we sometimes have hardly the heart to think, is the reunion to which the hymn seems to point, and with that every other recovery seems both sure and possible. Dogmatist as Newman was, there was one dogma which kept asserting its power over him at the time when he wrote the hymn, of which everyone of us needs to be reconvinced from time to time. It was what Mark Rutherford calls "the dogma of a personal calling." Let that dogma return into a man's life with all the joy and self-respect that it brings, and the last lines of the hymn will say for him very perfectly what he feels.

Too late for most of us to feel these influences for the first time, it is never too late to feel them again. To have felt them once means more than we can fully

appreciate. I cannot believe that "a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things," but it is possible to think that some long past period of happier days is just what gives divine influences their greatest hold upon us still.

How differently Christ deals with the hardened and sophisticated life from the way we generally employ. If such a life is conquered and won, we are inclined to think that it will only be through something so novel and surprising that it will tax our inventiveness to find it. We think that earlier influences are a spent force. Men are always thinking that, and so they try to meet the situation with something utterly new and unheard of. But Christ taught that it was only by something childlike coming over them again that these hardened and disenchanted lives would find their way back into power and faith. That earlier touch whose remem-

brance often makes our despair, has a might in which Christ placed all his trust. His only way is to use it again. "His flesh came again like the flesh of a little child," is the description given of the cure of Naaman, and it is the best description still of what happens to the spirit of a man when it is changed. Without believing just as Christ believed about the possibility of such things, no one can ever become a Master in Israel. Nicodemus was apparently a man who believed that the angel faces could never smile again. It was too good to believe. Things might be improved a good deal, no doubt, and the young Master might be the one to help improve them, but as for beginning all over again, no one had ever suggested it to him and he was startled. But very shortly the old scholastic found leaping out of his life unexpected flashes of courage and newness, such as he had not known since

the glow of his youth, while something like a morn began to brighten upon one who had expected little more than that he might not be quite vanquished by the night.

It is in the things that come again that life takes on its finest glow and power. The purpose that is given back to us comes as a stronger purpose than the one with which we began, and by its return we learn how different a divine purpose is from the wavering and uncertain purpose which is made up wholly out of our own minds and wills. As graciously as the light is called the kindly light, this second advent of our highest hopes and ideals is described as being an influence which comes not mainly with condemnation for lost years, but as something which welcomes us back.

Full as it is of beauty and of thought, what makes the glory of the hymn after all is the quiet assumption that at the end

of discipline the soul shall have restored to it what it has lost. The hymn has sometimes been proscribed in Newman's own communion because of its apparently non-evangelical character. It is the hymn of a humanist, where there appears no mention of church or creed or sacrament, but there is room for the humanist in the great circle of what is worthy to be called evangelical, while something of the gospel's very essence is felt in the way it is taken for granted that God will give it all back and give it all better than before. There is no struggle, no hint of penance, no delving too deeply into motives to see whether they be sincere, no effort to prove the intensity of one's yearnings, nor any thought of how nearly impossible such a return might be. As the mark of heathen religion is "trying hard," so the mark of Christian religion is "gently trusting," and this latter is what marks the hymn. It is

just a reassertion of that earliest creed which God has taught us that he always wishes us back and that the better angels of our nature will smile upon our return.

THE END

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